

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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***More Information?*** Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Sept. 22, 2006

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## Former Hazlet Mayor Sentenced to Two Years for Corruption

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(More)

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TRENTON – A federal judge today sentenced former Hazlet Mayor Paul A. Coughlin to

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two years in prison for taking a \$3,000 cash bribe from a cooperating witness who Coughlin believed was a corrupt contractor, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Joel A. Pisano also fined Coughlin \$5,000 and ordered him to surrender to the federal Bureau of Prisons after a prison assignment is made. Coughlin faced mandatory restitution of the \$3,000 bribe, but he paid that to the government before today's sentencing.

Coughlin, 42, of Hazlet, pleaded guilty on May 30 to one count of accepting a corrupt payment. Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Coughlin faced a sentencing range of between 21 and 27 months in prison.

"We are pleased with the long sentence imposed," said Christie. "Each time a plea or a sentencing occurs in these corruption cases, we hope that other public officials tempted to serve themselves will consider what has happened to Mr. Coughlin and others."

Coughlin admitted at his plea hearing that he accepted the cash payment in May 2004 in return for attempting to steer to the cooperating witness public work in Hazlet, including the contract to demolish the former Hazlet Town Hall building.

Coughlin was originally charged in a criminal complaint on Feb. 22, along with 10 other current and former public officials in Monmouth County. All were charged with either money laundering or taking corrupt payments or services from the same cooperating witness posing as a contractor. Coughlin was the mayor of Hazlet at the time of his arrest but subsequently resigned.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Red Bank Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Leslie Wiser, Jr., with the investigation of Coughlin and the other defendants in the Operation Bid Rig investigation. The case was handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Judith H. Germano of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division.

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Defense Counsel: Jerome Ballorotto, Esq. Trenton